

A Tribute to John I. Goodlad

ASU Inside the Academy

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- 1) **Nature of Relationship** – my real first introduction to John Goodlad was when AACTE was attempting to solicit John's participation in the AACTE governance. I was the Association's Chief Executive Office and the Association's Nominating Committee had given me the task of seeking out his acceptance of their invitation to be a candidate for the position of AACTE President. I knew of his impressive work at UCLA as both dean and scholar and had talked briefly with him at a Summer Institute conducted by the Council of Chief State School Officers a couple of summers following the release of his defining work, *A Place Called School*. At the time, I am not sure I was aware of his considerable role in shaping teacher education policy while at Chicago and Emory, or later at UCLA, nor the role he had as a frequent contributor to the work of the NEA's TEPS Commission – the body that largely shaped the way we have thought about teacher education for much of the past half century. As a graduate student, I had listened to him give a lecture in Chicago in the Tower of the old Hilton Hotel on Michigan Avenue about teacher education and knew that he had been part of the group of scholars who had shaped the Conant Study on teacher education.

John's voice was prominent in the policy debates regarding teacher education as president of the National Society for the Study of Education and the American Educational Research Association and AACTE wanted to solicit his engagement in the work of the Association. I think I was aware of his significant influence in the formation of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and his strong beliefs about what represented high quality in the education of teachers, but I am not sure that I fully appreciated his incredible ability to command a conversation or shape a policy debate. I do know that I was in awe long before I had my first genuine opportunity to spend time with him.

With the request from the AACTE Nominating Committee, I sought an opportunity to visit with him and invite him to be a candidate for AACTE President. I travelled to Seattle to personally extend that invitation. His assistant and I agreed on a time and place. He arrived in his little convertible Benz and we shared a wonderful and much extended breakfast – blueberry pancakes, if I remember correctly. Dapper, engaging, indefatigable and loquacious, we talked of his renewed interest in the education of teachers and the opportunities that a grant from the Exxon Education Foundation would afford him to think more deeply about ways of preparing teachers for renewed schools. (I think I confessed that part of my motivation in coming was to solicit a role for AACTE in his study of education schools.) There was a sparkle in his eyes and a sense of command as he asked why he should be a candidate. (Years later, he would testify before Senator Kennedy's Education Committee and the Senator's staff later confided that what most impressed the Senator about John Goodlad was both his "voice" and his sense of presence

amidst a group of luminaries in American education. He simply “overshadowed” others by that presence and his use of voice in his testimony.)

For a host of reasons, we “connected” on a range of issues and he shared his ambitions for what would become the trilogy of books for *Teachers for Our Nation’s Schools*. We talked of the connections between AACTE and the Education Commission of the States and potential for that collaboration to contribute to what would become known as the agenda for change for educator preparation. We talked about a number of Association leaders that he had worked with in prior studies (particularly Robert Anderson) and as dean at UCLA and how the planned study could coincide with his presidency of the AACTE. He already had a lengthy resume with *A Place Called School* still commanding the attention of school leaders and others. (I shared the fact that I had recently led a discussion of his book for a group of diplomatic wives and he was intrigued by how the book was chosen.) We probably talked about the Holmes Group and its relationship to AACTE (and to his work) and the nascent Renaissance Group and he described the continuing college-school partnership represented by the National Network. I went to Seattle to formally introduce myself and to solicit his involvement in the Association and I came away with a mentor and a friend, a professional colleague and candidate for the AACTE leadership role, who has continued to shape the way that I think of schooling in 21st century America.

The conversation that morning in the old circular hotel on the edge of the UW campus was the beginning of a deep and meaningful relationship. Subsequently, I served on advisory boards for the Center for Educational Renewal and as a senior associate for the Institute for Educational Inquiry. Deeply involved in the work that John and his colleague were doing that resulted in the trilogy on school renewal and teacher education, I also served as a member of the advisory group on the transformation of the National Network and its expansion into a vital network of education schools and local school districts. When John was elected to serve as president of AACTE, the relationship intensified as he contributed enormously to the vitality of the Association. Frequent trips to Seattle in the late 1980s and early 1990s cemented a friendship that remains one of the most meaningful of my professional career. Today, to receive one of John’s handwritten cards (with the photographs of teachers and students in rural America at the turn of the last century) prompts great memories and an enormous confidence about achieving the great things that John Goodlad has espoused for a lifetime.

- 2) **One Funny Memory** – Gary Fenstermacher and I served on an advisory group for the Exxon Education Foundation grant to the John’s Center. There were quarterly meetings of this group that usually began on Thursday evening and extended until Saturday afternoon. They were intense intellectually-demanding affairs for which John and his Seattle-based colleagues planned meticulously in the days prior to our arrival. There were papers to be read and great ideas to consider. John would offer inspiring insights into the works that he was reading but sometimes had a tendency to “drone on”, particularly in the time leading up to the mad-dash to SEATAC and the last flight to the east coast. Gary and I loved to sit at the foot of the table on these

occasions and to offer “commentary” on what was transpiring. John tolerated our misbehavior but then decided he would reseal us. His tactic was to prepare name or place cards (“tents”) for the twenty or so-advisors who regularly attended these meetings which, in reality, were cards to separate us and assign us to seats far apart. We, of course, took the coffee time preceding the meeting to rearrange the cards and thwart his attempt to control the conversation. I think this was one of those occasions when we heard stories of the Reform School for Boys in Western British Columbia, where John has served as educational superintendent for a brief period early in his life. While at the time he described us as “errant children”, they are basis for the fondest of memories of John Goodlad.

- 3) **Something Memorable** – while the relationship John had with Lynn (his wife of more than 50 years, who was an extraordinary and much accomplished woman in her own right, and who always made John “more real”) is the thing his friends most remember, the single most important event John and I we shared was the celebration of the release of *Teachers for Our Nation’s Schools*. It was a true Night at the Museum *affair* with two days of celebration at the Smithsonian Institution’s Castle on the Mall in Washington, DC. Luminaries from the government, academy, Congress, philanthropy and the Washington-based professional associations participated in a celebratory dinner and an array of panels and symposia. Each of the ideas in *Teachers* was examined and much praise was rendered for both the argument and the eloquence with which the book had been written. Few of the participants understood that every word had been painstakingly written by John by hand with multiple drafts and much editing to produce the single most important book on the role of schooling in a political democracy. When Albert Shanker recognized the book as “teacher education’s Flexner Report” (after the famous study of American – and Canadian – medical education by Abraham Flexner some eighty years earlier), John beamed.

That was the night I also learned of John’s important role with the earlier study of teacher education undertaken by James Conant in the early 1960s. One of the attendees at the event was Michael Usdan, then President of the Institute for Educational Leadership, who attributed much of what Conant had written to the influence of John. Ever reticent to accept praise, Goodlad and Usdan then described their roles in the Conant team of scholars and advisors as little more than “bag carriers” – ensuring that the Harvard President’s luggage was transported appropriately. They recounted stories of Conant and his intrepid band of 15 prominent educators who visited some 77 institutions in 22 states in the early part of that decade. The culminating book was *The Education of American Teachers* (1963) which proved to be a model for Goodlad’s own investigation of teacher education and what then led to the writing of *Teachers for Our Nation’s Schools*.

- 4) **The Significance of Goodlad** - John Goodlad’s least successful book is one called *Romances with Schools* (2004). It is John’s autobiography (although he adorns the idea of describing the book as such) and my most favorite of all the ones he has written. It is a memoir of his schooling at the North Star School in Vancouver and his subsequent experience as a teacher in a one-room

school in rural British Columbia during the Great Depression. One sees in his wonderful portrayal of the life of a young teacher in a one-room school house, a bond with the teacher in Winslow Homer's *Snap the Whip*, the most famous of Homer's paintings. Goodlad describes the correspondence courses that constituted much of his formal training to be a teacher, his courtship of a young librarian, his time as a graduate student at the University of Chicago (and his work with Ralph Tyler), and his formative work in the Chicago suburbs and then Atlanta, Los Angeles and, finally, Seattle. *Romances* is big and imaginative and evokes powerful images of the intellectual life that John Goodlad has led.

Goodlad had written some 30 books when he penned *Romances*, but this was the one where he best described his vision for American schooling and the need for a protected space in which young people could develop and learn and engage with one another and see fulfillment and a sense of accomplishment. He described schools as places where there is a cultivation of the sensitivities and sensibilities, self-respect and worthiness. He pleaded that this should be space free of the "pernicious influences" of standardized testing and student tracking. It is probably the least "technical" of his writings but the one that is both the most eloquent and the most engaging. Once, while on the upper deck of the East Edgar offices of the Institute (with the inspiring Cascades in the background and Lake Union at the foot), I inquired about the title and whether this was his or his editor's choice. He redirected my inquiry and raised the question of what it would be like if every student could have a true romance with their school; to experience in their schooling a love affair the equal of the great loves in one's life. John's love affair with Lynn dominated his life but his romance with schools and schooling drove his writing and his scholarship, his joys and his passions. The enduring question remains what we do to ensure that every child has similar opportunities.

- 5) **The Essence of the Man** - Perhaps the reason that I so like *Romances* is that the essence of John Goodlad emerges in those pages. He is ambitious and driven, self-disciplined and demanding of himself and others. He has the highest expectations for himself and others and at times he is enormously disappointed by the shortcoming of others. Somehow, he has withstood or overcome these disappointments and maintained an abiding interest in the well-being of all others. He is interested in everything and continues to have an expanding array of range of passions (baseball, the Mariners, boating, and fishing among a few). John has built an extraordinary life with an intimate circle of friends, colleagues, admirers, and former students. Intensely loyal to his collaborators and colleagues, he has bolstered their advances and lent them his credibility. He believes passionately in the humanity of all and the cultivation of that humanity in schools the equal of which he describes in *Romances*. In his demeanor and style, his engagements and accomplishments, his is a dominant voice for goodness in the way we approach the challenge of schooling young people.

I once tried to tease Goodlad that he had two "voices" – one that he used with Lynn, Stephen, Paula and an intimate circle of friends – and the other - a public voice - that is both eloquent and well grounded. Seemingly, he was always able to navigate between those voices in ways

that were genuine and sincere. I always wanted to have John be a speaker at the AACTE Annual Meeting because I knew that he could fill a ballroom with an audience when no one else could do so – indeed there would be many sitting on the floor and standing along the walls to catch a glimpse and to hear his “public voice”. He would also use his personal voice to engage graduate students and assistant professors who would line-up to have the opportunity to shake his hand and to have a brief conversation – however long it would take. He is caring and engaging. He is a true giant of 20th century American education with a message for all for the future. .